

Glenda Wiles

From: Earl Pollard [emp@cybernet1.net]
Sent: Saturday, December 20, 2008 3:24 PM
To: Glenda Wiles
Subject: To The Ravalli County Commissioners

The FAA came to the Bitterroot Valley in 1995 declaring the Federal Government is determined to build a new, larger and very expensive General Aviation Airport on the site of the light aircraft public airport that has been adequately serving the Valley since the 1930's. The present sport flying airport serves less than three percent of the population of the County. This fine well built airport will not approach anywhere near its service capacity this century. Heavy general aviation aircraft like jets account for less than 2.3% based in Hamilton and are adequately served by the 4,200 ft. runway. Total jet aircraft operations, both home-based and itinerate aircraft will only increase by 2.6% by 2020.

No demographic profiles have been done to develop projections for the remaining life span of the airport. Residential encroachment is the most common cause of general aviation airport closures across the U.S.A. Development in the Valley poses a real threat to the airport because of its central location.

If the much larger and expensive new airport is constructed the burden of maintenance, repair, security, quick response and fire protection falls on the taxpayers. Any and all revenue derived from airport operation must be spent for airport maintenance. I believe today the County places all revenue from airport leases etc. in the general fund which is a violation of the County's agreement with the FAA.

You must ask yourself, what prompted the FAA to come to the Valley in 1995. Both the Stevensville City Airport and the County Airport were visited. Stevensville turned down the FAA. The County welcomed the FAA and permitted them to plan and build a new airport three times the land size of the present airport.

This endeavor by the Federal Government in Hamilton is an integral part of the FAA project to expand and improve the operation of the Missoula International Airport. The intended role of the Ravalli County Airport is to provide for overflow of general aviation aircraft and airfreight forwarding operations that choke and threaten airline operations in Missoula. If you doubt this just consider that Hamilton is less than an hour's drive from the international airport by four lane highways and the only general aviation airport capable of handling any overflow for several hundred miles as it has demonstrated in the past. The latest projections by the FAA contractor show that the Valley residents can expect to have between one and three aircraft in the sky over our homes every hour of every 24 hour day every day of the year. I consider this projection to be wildly overstated, but the fact remains there will be more planes over our homes.

I think it is very unfortunate that the "new majority" of commissioners will be required to live with the reputation of presiding over the most significant degradation of our life style here in the Bitterroot because they did not recognize the opportunity to reconsider a terribly flawed decision by their predecessors 15 years ago. Future generations will of

necessity, carry the expensive load keeping the airport open until the airport is closed because of overwhelming public hostility, which will be exacerbated by the new airport operations.

The naked truth is that our fine publicly owned recreational airport is being raped by the FAA with the enthusiastic assistance and closely coordinated contributions of the Airport Advisory Board appointed by previous Commissions that has been out of control for years.

The County Commission should immediately notify the FAA that reconsideration of the 1995 decision agreeing to the FAA proposal for a new airport is now under review. Considerable time has elapsed since the initial discussions and the development in the area seriously challenges and changes the original foundations justifying a new and larger airport. The FAA will be informed when the review is completed. At the same time the Commission should close down the Airport Advisory Board at once and close any channels the Board has open to the FAA.

Lastly, the scheduled public meeting for 7 January should be cancelled with public notification before Christmas.

Earl Pollard